<u>In The Claims</u>

Claims

1.   (Currently Amended) A method of assigning a <u>plurality of</u> pending call<u>s within a contact center</u> to ~~one of~~ a plurality of agents at least some of which are human agents, such method comprising the steps of:

        providing <u>an offer for each of</u> ~~a description of~~ the <u>plurality of</u> pending call<u>s</u> to at least some of the human agents who are available to handle calls prior to assignment of the pending call<u>s</u> to an agent<u>, said offers being presented on a respective terminal of each of the at least some agents where the offer and a description of each of the plurality of pending calls is presented within a separate window on the terminal</u> and allowing the available human agents to <u>separately</u> bid on handling <u>each of</u> the pending call<u>s</u>, the description <u>of each of the plurality of pending calls</u> including call associated information, and non-call associated contextual information of the pending call;

        receiving bids <u>within the contact center</u> to handle the pending call<u>s</u> from the at least some of the available human agents; and

        <u>the contact center</u> assigning <u>at least some of</u> the pending call<u>s</u> to a human agent of the plurality of agents with a highest relative received bid.

2.   (Previously Presented) The method of assigning the call as in claim 1 wherein the description of the call comprises a call target identifier and a client identifier.

3.   (Currently Amended) The method of assigning the call as in claim 2 further comprising submitting a lowest possible bid from an agent of the plurality of agents in response to the agent double-clicking on an Enter Bid button or window.

4.   (Previously Presented) The method of assigning the call as in claim 1 wherein the step of providing the description further comprises displaying the provided information on a terminal display of each available agent of the plurality of agents in a separate call selection window for each call.

5.   (Previously Presented) The method of assigning the call as in claim 1 further comprising defining the bid as being a numerical value between two non-zero limits.

6.   (Previously Presented) The method of assigning the call as in claim 1 wherein the received bids are one of a general and a specific bid.

7.   (Previously Presented) The method of assigning the call as in claim 1 further comprising classifying the call as to media type.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method of assigning the call as in claim 7 further comprising determining an agent average number of calls handled per time period of a call type of the classified call for each agent of the plurality of agents.

9.   (Original) The method of assigning the call as in claim 8 further comprising calculating a group average of calls handled per time period of the call type of the classified call.

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of assigning the call as in claim 9 further comprising rejecting any bid from an agent of the plurality of agents where the agent's determined agent average exceeds a threshold value above the calculated group average.

11.   (Original) The method of assigning the call as in claim 1 further comprising assigning the call to a default agent of the plurality of agents when an acceptable bid is not received within a predetermined time period.

12.   (Currently Amended) A apparatus used within a contact center for assigning a plurality of pending calls to one of a plurality of agents at least some of which are human agents, such apparatus comprising:
        means for displaying an offer including a description for each of the calls to at least one of the human agents of the plurality of agents who is available for conversing with callers prior to assignment of the calls to an agent, said means for displaying containing a separate window for each of the plurality of offers, thereby offering the calls to the at least one available human agent

for bidding, the description including context information providing textual content of the call or a descriptor indicating a context from which the call originated;

means within the contact center for ~~displaying~~ receiving a bid to handle a call of the plurality of calls from at least one of the human agents; and

means within the contact center for assigning the call to an agent of the at least one of the available human agents with a highest relative received bid.

13.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 12 wherein the means for displaying further comprises means for submitting a lowest possible bid in response to one of the human agents double-clicking on a Enter Bid button or window.

14.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 13 further comprising means for rejecting any bid from an agent of the plurality of agents who does not meet a minimum skill level for the call.

15.   (Original) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 12 wherein the means for providing the description further comprises means for displaying the provided information on a terminal display of each agent of the plurality of agents.

16.   (Original) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 12 further comprising means for defining the bid as being a numerical value between two limits.

17.   (Original) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 16 wherein the means for defining the bid as being a numerical value between two limits further comprises means for defining the two limits as being a numerical value between one and ten.

18.   (Original) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 12 further comprising means for classifying the call.

19.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 18 further comprising means for determining an agent average number of calls handled per time period of a call type of the classified call for each agent of the plurality of agents.

20.   (Original) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 19 further comprising means for calculating a group average of calls handled per time period of the call type of the classified call.

21.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 20 further comprising means for rejecting any bid from an agent of the plurality of agents where the agent's determined agent average exceeds a threshold value above the calculated group average.

22.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus within a contact center for assigning a plurality of calls to one of a plurality of human agents, such apparatus comprising:
        a call display processor adapted to provide an offer including a description of each of the plurality of calls, the description including context of the call to each of the plurality of human agents on a respective terminal of each of the human agents prior to assignment of the call to an agent of the plurality of human agents;
        a respective call selection window for each of the plurality of calls displayed on each of the respective terminals, each of the call selection windows adapted to display the provided description of a call of the plurality of calls and to allow available agents of the plurality of agents to bid on the call; and
        a call assignment processor of the contact center adapted to receive the bids and to assign the call to an agent of the plurality of human agents with a highest relative received bid.

23.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 22 wherein the description includes both call associated information and a contextual indication of the call.

24.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 23 further comprising an averaging agent processor adapted to calculate an agent group average of calls handled by the group for each call type, and wherein the assignment processor rejects any bids from an agent for the remainder of the a period if calls of a particular type served by the agent during the period exceeds a threshold amount above the calculated group average for the particular type.

25. (Previously Presented) The apparatus for assigning the call as in claim 22 wherein bids on the calls further comprise a numerical value between two non-zero limits.

26. (Currently Amended) A method of assigning a plurality of calls within a contact center to ~~one of~~ a plurality of agents, such method comprising the steps of:

providing a an offer within a respective call selection window ~~description~~ for each of the plurality of calls the offer including a description with context information regarding a context of the call to each of the plurality of agents;

displaying the provided ~~description~~ offers to the plurality of agents on respective terminals of the agents prior to assignment of the calls to ~~an agent of~~ the plurality of agents;

receiving at least one bid within the contact center to handle ~~the~~ a call of the plurality of calls from ~~each~~ at least some of the plurality of agents available to converse with callers; and

assigning the call within the contact center to an agent of the plurality of agents with a highest relative value of the received bids.

27. (Previously Presented) A method of assigning a plurality of calls within a contact center to ~~one of~~ a plurality of human agents, such method comprising the steps of:

providing an offer within a respective call selection window for each of the plurality of calls, the offer including a description of the call including call associated information and information indicating a context of the call;

displaying the provided ~~description~~ offers to a portion of the plurality of human agents available to converse with a caller on a respective terminal of the portion, prior to assignment of the call to an agent of the plurality of human agents;

receiving within the contact center a bid to handle the call from each of the portion of the plurality of human agents;

the contact center comparing a value of each of the received bids; and

the contact center assigning the call to an agent of the plurality of human agents with a highest relative value of the compared bids.

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